United Nations A/C.4/70/SR.15

General Assembly
Seventieth session
Official Records

Distr.: General
8 January 2016

Original: English

# Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

**Summary record of the 15th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 29 October 2015, at 10 a.m.

*Chair*: Mr. Medan (Vice-Chair) ..... (Croatia)

## Contents

Agenda item 53: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

Agenda item 58: Questions relating to information (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Control Unit (srcorrections@un.org), and *incorporated in a copy of the record.*

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org/).

15-18861 (E)

Please recycle

*in the absence of the Chair, Mr. Medan (Croatia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

**Agenda item 53: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space** (*continued*)
(A/C.4/70/L.2/Rev.1 and A/C.4/70/L.7)

*Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.2/Rev.1: International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space*

1. **Mr. Abbani** (Algeria), speaking as the representative of the Chair of the Committee's Working Group of the Whole on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, said that the Working Group had met three times to discuss the draft resolution and had agreed to the revised version contained in document A/C.4/70/L.2/Rev.1, which was being submitted for consideration.

2. **The Chair** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

3. **Mr. Storaci** (Observer for the European Union), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States, said that the European Union supported the principle that all States Members of the United Nations should have the right to become members of its bodies as long as the relevant rules and procedures were followed. That right should not be challenged on political grounds as that would set a dangerous precedent and hinder the spirit of respect and cooperation that should govern the work of the Committee and of the Organization at large. The European Union supported the draft resolution and its member States, which were all sponsors, would vote in favour of it.

4. *Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.2/Rev.1 was adopted.*

*Draft decision A/C.4/70/L.7: Increase in the membership of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space*

5. **The Chair** said that Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Micronesia, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Uganda, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland had joined the sponsors.

*Statements made in explanation of vote before the voting*

6. **Ms. Radwan** (Saudi Arabia), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, expressed support for the candidacies of El Salvador, Oman, Qatar, Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates to become members of COPUOS). Their membership on the Committee would help to strengthen international cooperation on space activities, promote economic and social development and allow those countries to benefit from the Committee's expertise. However, the Group had reservations about the candidacy of Israel, which it suspected did not intend to use space for purely peaceful purposes. The Group was also concerned about the Israeli Government's lack of transparency in its space-related activities, use of nuclear power for military purposes and refusal to sign any international agreements on the use of outer space, all of which ran counter to the Committee's aims. A further matter of concern was the continued occupation by Israel of Arab lands and its repeated violations of international law.

7. She expressed surprise that the Arab States concerned had not been consulted about the draft decision, in which the six States had been mentioned but not named. Each State's candidacy should have been considered separately.

8. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation strongly opposed the candidacy of Israel for membership in COPUOS and requested a vote on the draft decision, highlighting that his delegation's opposition was motivated by legal, not political factors; the simple fact that Israel was an occupying Power, in contravention of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, disqualified it from accession to United Nations entities and affiliated bodies. Furthermore, decades after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 273 (III) of 1949, which stipulated that to become a member of the United Nations, Israel must comply with resolution 181 (II) on the establishment of a Palestinian State and resolution 194 (III) on the right of return, Israel had not only failed to implement those resolutions, but continued to show contempt for their provisions within the Organization itself. His delegation also doubted that Israel had purely peaceful intentions for the use of outer space, particularly in view of its aggressive

attitude and large stockpile of weapons, including nuclear weapons.

9. Delegations should not seek to justify any deviation from the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolutions. Before applying for membership in any organization affiliated with the United Nations, Israel must first comply with the Organization's Charter and resolutions, end its occupation of Arab lands in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, and cease its aggression against Arab citizens under its occupation.

10. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, while his delegation welcomed the appointments of El Salvador, Oman, Qatar, Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates as members of COPUOS, it opposed the way in which the decision had been drafted, which had led to the current unfavourable situation in the Fourth Committee, and objected to the appointment of Israel as a member of COPUOS. The lack of transparency, consultation and negotiation — which should form the basis of the Committee's work — in the preparation of the draft decision was unacceptable. One could ask why the names of the candidate countries had been omitted; that in itself was testimony to the lack of transparency.

11. *A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour*:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Oman, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Zambia.

*Against*:

Namibia

*Abstaining*:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Belarus, Central African Republic, Gabon, Iraq, Kuwait, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, Yemen.

12. *Draft decision A/C.4/70/L.7 was adopted by 117 votes to 1, with 21 abstentions.*

13. **Mr. AlJarallah** (Kuwait) expressed support for the membership in COPUOS of El Salvador, Oman, Qatar, Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates, which would strengthen international cooperation in the field of outer space and allow them to benefit from the Committee's expertise. However, his delegation had reservations concerning the membership of Israel, which it did not believe had peaceful intentions in the field of outer space, and underlined that the word "peaceful" could not be associated with Israel. He expressed concern at the lack of transparency of Israel in its space-related activities, use of nuclear power for military purposes and refusal to sign any international agreements on the use of outer space, all of which ran counter to the peaceful nature of the Committee's work. Also of concern was the failure by Israel to comply with any international resolutions and its ongoing policy of aggression, occupation of Arab territories and violations of international law.

14. **Mr. Alnaqshabandi** (Iraq) said that his delegation had abstained from voting on the draft decision because, while it supported the membership of El Salvador, Oman, Qatar, Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates, it opposed that of Israel, which it did not believe had peaceful intentions for the use of outer space.

15. **Mr. Abbani** (Algeria) said that his delegation supported the membership of El Salvador, Oman, Qatar, Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates in COPUOS, as their candidacies had been unanimously approved at the fifty-eighth session of COPUOS. Algeria rejected the membership of Israel, whose intentions could by no means be peaceful given that country's dubious actions, and had therefore abstained from voting. Nevertheless, he reiterated his country's support for the Committee and, in particular, the Arab States that had joined it.

16. **Mr. Al-Hamadi** (Qatar) said that his delegation supported the views and reasons expressed in the statement delivered on behalf of the Arab Group, reaffirmed its support for the work of COPUOS and highlighted his Government's application for membership of the Committee.

17. **Ms. Ngyema Ndong** (Gabon) said that her delegation had been surprised by the request for a recorded vote on a draft decision that would normally have been adopted by consensus.

18. **Mr. Pressman** (United States), welcoming the appointment of the six candidate countries to COPUOS, said that it was an important body whose work benefitted its entire, diverse membership: countries with elaborate space programmes, countries interested in developing such programmes, and countries interested in simply benefiting from space technology. That diversity gave COPUOS its strength and its ability to advance critical technical collaboration — from using space-based information for disaster management to promoting interoperability of satellite navigation systems. That was why the United States had drawn up and submitted the draft decision, whose adoption would ensure that COPUOS continued to enjoy the benefits of a diverse membership and that it did not become mired in an unfair, unhelpful, politicized debate about expanding its membership — a debate that did not serve the work or mission of the Committee. The support for and adoption of the draft decision affirmed that the United Nations was capable of avoiding unnecessary politicization as it focused on advancing substantive work that could benefit all countries and peoples. The United States was confident that the Committee would be stronger by virtue of the participation of its new members.

19. With over 30 years of activity in space, Israel had much to offer COPUOS. It had collaborated internationally with many space agencies, including his country's National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The baseless suggestion that Israel had anything other than peaceful intentions regarding outer space perpetuated an inflammatory claim designed to advance an agenda instead of the important technical work of COPUOS. Efforts to delegitimize Israel in the United Nations were biased, wrong and counterproductive. They only served to undermine the purpose of the institution and the noble ideals upon which it had been founded. The United States would continue to work relentlessly to combat any such effort and protect the important work — including the work of COPUOS — that Member States must do together.

20. **Mr. Danon** (Israel) said that his country was pleased to become a member of COPUOS and commended the many Member States who had supported the draft decision for the professionalism and principled manner with which they had approached it, keeping political differences out of the decision-making process and demonstrating their commitment to the core value of impartiality. It was unfortunate that the representatives of certain countries sought to politicize the work of what had always been a purely professional and non-political Committee. It must not be hijacked by those who sought to abuse the platform for political objectives. There was no shortage of political forums in the United Nations; COPUOS should not be one of them.

21. Israel had a long history of cooperation with COPUOS and looked forward to playing an active role as a member. As former Minister of Science, Technology and Space, he could attest to his country's commitment to international cooperation for the peaceful use of outer space. As it embarked on its space programme in the 1960s, even with the challenges facing a developing country, Israel had invested heavily because it had understood the potential of space research. Since then, its ever-increasing dedication to space and spirit of innovation had resulted in remarkable achievements: Israel was one of only 11 countries to have space launch capabilities and its technology was helping to connect isolated populations and improve Internet access in the developing world. Furthermore, a number of important space conferences had been held in Israel.

22. An Israeli citizen had been aboard the Columbia shuttle as a payload specialist, and while the country still mourned the loss of the crew, Israel honoured its commitment to exploring the unknown frontier and expanding the boundaries of human knowledge. In the spirit of scientific enterprise and pioneering adventure, Israel looked to a future of international cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space. It was eager to pursue its cosmic vision as a full member of COPUOS and its future collaboration with the United Nations.

23. **Ms. Samarasinghe** (Sri Lanka), welcoming the adoption of the draft decision, said that her country was pleased to become a member of COPUOS. Sri Lanka had supported the draft decision and the presentation of all candidates as a single package, in keeping with established practice, and was against the politicization of COPUOS, which was a technical and scientific committee.

**Agenda item 58: Questions relating to information** (*continued*) (A/70/21 and A/70/220)

24. **Mr. Almahmoud** (United Arab Emirates) said that the media, in particular new technological and social media, played a crucial role in driving change and promoting communication and links among peoples. He commended the efforts of the Department of Public Information to promote the work of the United Nations, particularly through social networks, and noted that various buildings in his country had been illuminated in blue earlier that month as part of the Department's campaign to "Turn the World UN Blue" to mark the seventieth anniversary of the Organization.

25. His Government had recently launched the Sawab Center initiative, in cooperation with the United States of America, to combat the exploitation of modern media by terrorist groups, including Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, to defame religions and cultures, incite extremism and violence, sow discord and recruit fighters, by instead giving a voice to the millions of people who stood against the actions and discourse of such groups.

26. Certain media outlets that had attempted to defame the principles of Islam should refrain from repeating such actions, which fuelled hatred, discrimination and racism against Muslims and served as a pretext to lure young people all over the world into joining extremist groups.

27. His delegation commended the work of the Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information and encouraged them to promote the use of Arabic in all their activities to bring it onto a par with the five other official languages. To that end, his Government had recently provided an Arabic translation of the booklet entitled "Child Soldiers: A Handbook for Security Sector Actors", which it used in capacity-building for the country's peacekeeping forces.

28. Increased efforts were needed to effectively report on developments regarding the question of Palestine, the situation in the Middle East and the suffering inflicted upon those living in the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, where every day people were being killed, injured or displaced and their property damaged, in flagrant violation of the principles of human rights and international law. In addition, international cooperation should be strengthened in the field of technology transfer and information-sharing as a means of promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence among peoples and States.

29. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) said that the Department played a key role not only in reflecting the hopes of the international community, but also in making them a reality. Over the past year, the Department had promoted the United Nations Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize, held the International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East and helped to organize celebrations for the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, among other achievements. The United Nations information centres had been instrumental in raising awareness about the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and promoting initiatives to mark the seventieth anniversary of the Organization. In order to reach as broad an audience as possible, the centres worked in partnership with governments, academia and civil society, and the Arabic Radio Unit had concluded a pro bono agreement with the audio platform SoundCloud.

30. Given the important role of the United Nations in world affairs, his delegation called for parity among the six official languages in all of the Organization's outreach work. The information centres should continue to enhance and broaden their activities and use primarily traditional media when disseminating information in developing countries, which struggled to keep pace with technological and scientific progress.

31. If the international community genuinely wished to establish a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order, as set out in General Assembly resolution 34/182, and to promote free exchange of information, it should endeavour to bridge the digital divide by increasing the available human and technical resources in developing countries, which would certainly help to improve their information and communications systems, in line with the Millennium Declaration and target 17.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

32. His delegation commended the work of the Department and requested it to strengthen the special information programme on the question of Palestine with a view to reaching a just solution to the issue by ending the Israeli occupation and establishing an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

33. **Mr. Salimi** (Morocco) said that, in an era of globalization and information, disseminating the activities of the Organization in the media was more important than ever. The need for reliable, neutral and objective information remained imperative, and the promotion of peace, international solidarity, tolerance and sustainable development must remain at the heart of the Department's activities. Morocco therefore welcomed the activities planned under the special information programme on the question of Palestine and called for them to be strengthened in order to guarantee the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to an independent and viable State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Other activities, such as United Nations peacebuilding efforts, would benefit from greater media coverage. Member States could capitalize on the second review of peacebuilding architecture to launch a promotional campaign to raise awareness of that successful, yet largely invisible tool.

34. His delegation commended the Organization's communication and outreach in Africa during the Ebola crisis, which had mobilized the international community to stem the spread of the pandemic. Similarly, coverage of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the third International Conference on Financing for Development had generated the visibility needed to encourage the support and involvement of the international community. A major media campaign must also accompany the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in order to explain its objectives, foster its effective ownership and implementation by decision-makers, and make it accessible to target populations and relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, the Department should continue to give special attention to spreading the Organization's human values and promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue to combat the extremism and xenophobia that exacerbated tension and discord. That was vital in such troubled times, when the instrumentalization of religion called for greater vigilance and action.

35. Making greater use of information and communications technology was one way of covering an expanding list of issues with limited resources. Despite the considerable efforts in that regard, the digital divide and limited access to modern communications technology remained a reality, underscoring the importance of traditional media as the main information channel in many developing countries. The Department should therefore balance and adapt its programmes with that in mind. United Nations information centres also played a significant role in promoting the Organization's activities and universal values and should have the constant support of the Department. The Centre in Rabat took an active part in promoting the Organization's flagship activities through partnerships with academia and national and international media institutions in Morocco. One notable example of such cooperation was the organization, in collaboration with schools and relevant Government bodies, of a regional campaign to mobilize young people on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations.

36. Morocco, whose history and geography made it a melting pot of influences and cultures, was a staunch defender of multilingualism, which was a useful tool to combat xenophobia and exclusion. The country's linguistic and cultural diversity were enshrined in its Constitution and the multilingualism that characterized Morocco reinforced its attachment to the equitable treatment of the six official languages of the United Nations. His delegation was aware of the financial and logistical challenges involved and commended the Department for the efforts it had made in that regard. Furthermore, Morocco urged the Department to conduct sustained outreach and media campaigns on the upcoming climate change conferences and to provide the necessary support so that a firm international climate change agreement could be reached.

37. **Mr. Mana** (Cameroon) said that, despite the many United Nations resolutions calling for efforts to improve universal and equal access to information, the digital divide between developed countries and the lowest-income countries was deepening. The monopoly on technology was leading to a unified world view in which the "have nots" were at the mercy of the "haves". The information society was thus breeding a system of prejudice and incomprehension that could foster intolerance. That was why it was important to diversify sources of information and democratize access to information technology. Cameroon was determined not to sit on the sidelines of technological progress, but to be a part of the information society. It had undertaken a large-scale project to build multipurpose community telecentres that sought to improve Internet access in rural areas and support organizations working to reduce the country's digital divide and promote the information society. To that end, his Government was in the process of rolling out a 5,600 km-long national fibre optic network that would form the national backbone, connecting the main towns and cities across the country.

38. His delegation appreciated the Department's efforts to achieve an inclusive information society and to disseminate detailed information on the principles, ideals, objectives and work of the Organization. However, the Department could strengthen and contextualize its efforts in a number of ways. One example could be going beyond the simple reports on Boko Haram that were common in mainstream media outlets, and instead providing balanced, educational information from the United Nations — with the assistance of the United Nations Information Centre in Yaoundé — on the dangers of violent extremism and the virtues of tolerance and respect for diversity. Similarly, the Yaoundé centre could conduct a local outreach campaign on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its implementation.

39. Cameroon was convinced that the impact of United Nations action would be optimized by making the same information available to everyone, in real time. In that regard, despite the reticence of those concerned with cost-effectiveness, more should be done to ensure the equal treatment of all the official languages of the United Nations. Online information services should be made available in all six official languages without a significant lag between their publication in one language and their translation into the others. While the quality of the Department's online information was commendable, that information was inaccessible to a large part of the population, who lacked access to the Internet and relied on paper publications to obtain information. His delegation therefore urged the Organization to be people friendly and look beyond ecological and economic considerations while being paper smart. In that regard, the Information Centre in Yaoundé, which continued to make information available in hard copy and electronic format, did commendable work and should be given the human and financial resources needed.

*Draft resolution A: Information in the service of humanity* (A/70/21, chap. IV)

*Draft resolution B: United Nations public information policies and activities* (A/70/21, chap. IV)

40. **The Chair** said that neither of the draft resolutions had any programme budget implications. He took it that the Committee wished to take action on the two draft resolutions jointly.

41. *It was so decided.*

42. *Draft resolutions A and B were adopted.*

*The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.*